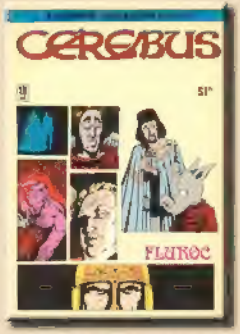

Sir Real's

UNDERGROUND COMIX CLASSIX

Cerebus #18

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Artists:
Dave Sim - 1, 3-22, 23-24(ad), 27(ad)
Denise Loubert - 2(e)
Jim Shooter - 25(letter)
Richard Pini - 25(letter+)
Wendy Pini - 25(letter+)
Aardvarks Anomalous - 25(letter)
Bryan Reeves - 25(letter)
Rayna Alsberg - 26(letter)

Comments:

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM PRESENTS

CEREBUS

18
JUL

$1.25

FLUROC

CEREBUS

A Note from the Publisher

In May, Mike Friedrich came up to Toronto from New York on a business trip for Marvel. (he works there now, you know) When he phoned Dave and I about going out for dinner while he was here, it seemed a strange coincidence. For at that time Dave was working on issue eighteen, which would tie Cerebus with Mike's Star *Reach as the longest running alternative comic. It feels like we've come quite a ways since issue one.

With this issue, I feel that Dave has begun to give a clearer picture of the individual outlook of the book. The humour is continuous and Cerebus proves once again that a sword alone does not a conqueror make. Personally, I have always preferred a barbed tongue to a pointy stick.

Now that Cerebus is monthly, Dave has been spending an enormous amount of time in his studio. He works from one in the afternoon until seven, comes home for dinner and one hour relaxing, then back to the studio until three in the morning. I've always felt that your living environment is where you spend the most time (obviously the studio), so we have moved it to a nicer location. I must say that he's quite pleased with the new studio and he can't wait to move into it. Now he gets to look at people on the street instead of on rooftops. Ah, it takes so little to make an artist happy!

And speaking of making Dave happy, number one on his list is doing this book, so get to it and read it!!! And I'll see ya next issue.

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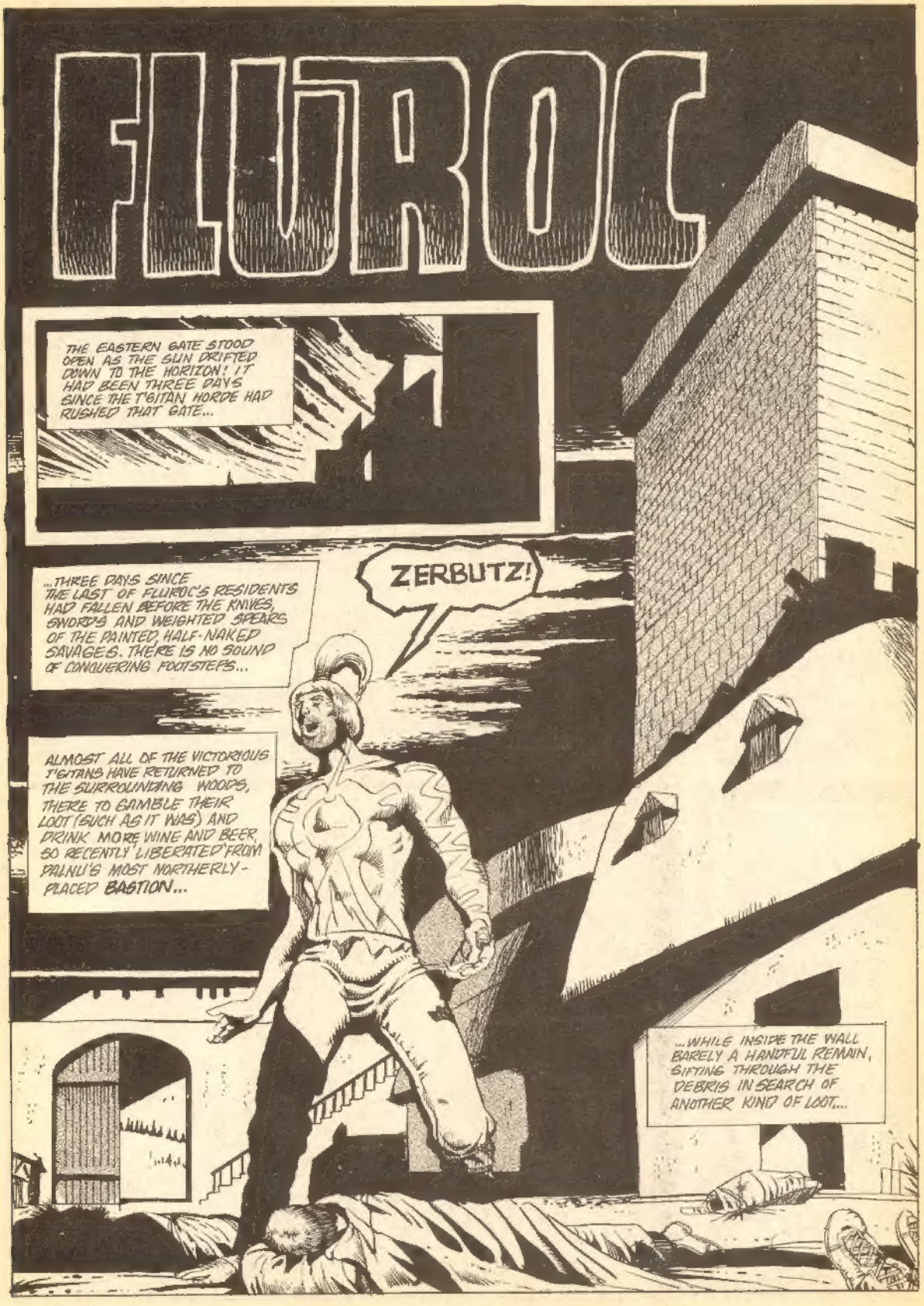

FLUROC
THE EASTERN GATE STOOD OPEN AS THE SUN DRIFTED DOWN TO THE HORIZON! IT HAD BEEN THREE DAYS SINCE THE T'GITAN HORDE HAD RUSHED THAT GATE...
...THREE DAYS SINCE THE LAST OF FLUROC'S RESIDENTS HAD FALLEN BEFORE THE KNIVES, SWORDS AND WEIGHTED SPEARS OF THE PAINTED, HALF-NAKED SAVAGES. THERE IS NO SOUND OF CONQUERING FOOTSTEPS...
ZERBUTZ!
ALMOST ALL OF THE VICTORIOUS T'GITANS HAVE RETURNED TO THE SURROUNDING WOODS, THERE TO GAMBLE THEIR LOOT (SUCH AS IT WAS) AND DRINK MORE WINE AND BEER, SO RECENTLY LIBERATED FROM PALNU'S MOST NORTHERLY-PLACED BASTION...
...WHILE INSIDE THE WALL BARELY A HANDFUL REMAIN, SIFTING THROUGH THE DEBRIS IN SEARCH OF ANOTHER KIND OF LOOT...

ZERBUTZ?
DOWN HERE, GRAUS...
THE STENCH OF DEATH HANGS HEAVILY IN THE HUMID WINTER AIR BUT THE T'GITAN SMELLS NOTHING. HE HAS BEEN A WARRIOR FOR THE LAST TWELVE SEASONS, AND HAS SEEN, SMELLED AND CAUSED ENOUGH DEATH TO BE ALMOST TOTALLY INSULATED FROM ITS IMPACT...
WHILE AT THE OTHER EXTREME A CERTAIN EARTH-PIG IS RELIVING OLFACTORY EXPERIENCES...
CEREBUS BETTER FIND WHAT HE'S LOOKING FOR SOON-- HE CAN FEEL HIS NOSTRIL HAIRS STARTING TO CURL
HAIL STROMM!
...THAT WOULD BE BETTER LEFT UN-LIVED IN THE FIRST PLACE...
THE ODD SALUTATION REMINDS CEREBUS OF THE FIRST TIME HE HEARD IT, AT THE TIME HE HAD BEEN TOO PREOCCUPIED TO THINK MUCH ABOUT IT, BUT NOW HIS CURIOSITY WAS GENUINELY AROUSED.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT STROMM, GRAUS?
"STROMM? GRAUS KNOW EFERYTHINK ABOUT STROMM! SON OF TARIM-- GOTT OF THUNTER-- FALL OUT OF CLOUDS! ADOPT T'GITANS AS HIS CHILDREN"
"STROMM SMART-- STRONG! GRAUS SEE HIM BREAK WINE BOTTLE OPEN WITH TEETH! GRAUS SAY TO SELF 'SELF--ISS MAN YOU BE PROUD TO FOLLOW!'..."
"ISS GOOD LIFE AS FOLLOWER OF THUNTER GOTT-- MUCH LOOTING, FREE BEER, STAY UP LATE AS GRAUS WANT"

WHAT ABOUT GUDRE?
GUDRE IS STROMM'S FIRST FOLLOWER. STROMM SAFE GUDRE FROM MANY LIONS... STROMM STARE AT LIONS. LIONS STOP.
STROMM WAVE ARMS IN AIR-- NEAREST LION GROWL AND COME TOWARD STROMM
...CLOSER...
...CLOSER!
STROMM BARES HISS TEETH! LION LEAP!... BUT STROMM HASS ALREATY HISS SWORD OUT...
SHUMP!
SWORD CUTS OFF LEG!
SHUMP!
SWORD CUTS OFF HET!
SWORD BECOMES BLUR...LIONS DROPPINK LIKE FLIES
SOON ALL ARE DET...
'THANK YOU, THANK YOU,' SAY GUDRE
STROMM MAKE GUDRE LIFE-LONK COMPANION UND MALE SECRETARY...
NOW GUDRE SPEAK FOR STROMM IN GREAT COUNCIL...
GUDRE BRINGS US STROMM'S WORD...
STROMM DOESN'T TALK MUCH HIMSELF DOES HE?

STROMM NOT TALK AT ALL! --THUNTER GOTT SAY VUN WORD UND HE WUT KNOCK WHOLE BUILTING OFER -- HE SAY "GUT MORNINK" UND MOUNTAIN RANGE WUT CR-RUMPLE...!
STROMM VERY CAREFUL-- THUNTER GOTT MUST NOT EFEN BELCH-- COULT DESTROY HALF OFF ARMY BY AC-CIDENT...
NEIN?
CEREBUS HAD NO IDEA THE LIFE OF A THUNDER GOD WAS SO...
...COMPLICATED.
CEREBUS MARVELS AT GUDRE'S HANDI-WORK-- HE HAD EFFECTIVELY MADE STROMM THE FOCUS OF ALL OF THE WARRIORS' ATTENTION..
...AND LEFT HIMSELF UNHAMPERED BY POLITICAL DEBATES IN THE PROCESS
GUDRE SAY "STROMM REST." STROMM NEET TIME TO GATHER STRENGTH FOR TRIAL AHEAT...
STROMM TELL US HISS PLAN WHEN TIME IGS RIGHT...
WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE STROMM HAS PLANNED?
IN THE MEANTIME, GUDRE WOULD BE LEFT ALONE TO PLAN THE COMING ASSAULT ON PALNU, MUSES THE EARTH-PIG, WHILE STROMM'S WARRIORS WAIT PATIENTLY...
AND WHEN GUDRE TELLS YOU THAT STROMM IS RESTED...?
GRAUS VILL BE READY. FOLLOW STROMM -- DO VHAT HAGS TO BE DONE...

GRAUG NOT UNTERSTANT VHY YOU STAY IN CITY-- NO MORE LOOT... VOMEN ARE ALL COLD UND BLUE UND STIFF...
CEREBUS AND GUDRE ARE SEARCHING THE WEALTHIER HOMES FOR BOOKS... THERE'S A GOOD POSSIBILITY WE COULD FIND SOME INFORMATION ON PALNU IN THEM...
SPECIFICALLY, WE'RE LOOKING FOR BOOKS ON PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO CONQUER THE CITY, IN THE HOPE THAT WE MIGHT FIND SOMETHING HELPFUL TO US...
UNFORTUNATELY, WHOEVER OWNED THIS COLLECTION SEEMS TO HAVE HAD A BIZARRE INTEREST IN STARS AND THE SUN AND THE MOON! IT'S GOING TO TAKE SOME TIME TO WADE THROUGH ALL OF THE DRIVEL TO FIND SOMETHING INTERESTING...
GRAUG STILL NOT UNTERSTANT...
GUDRE SAY "WE NEED MAGIC TO BEAT PALNU! WE GO LOOK"
MAGIC HERE SOMEWHERE! CEREBUS LOOK FOR STRONG MAGIC!
WHEN WE FIND MAGIC, SMASH PALNU INTO SMALL PIECES.
NO ONE GET AWAY!
NOW GRAUG UNTERSTANT.
VHY YOU NOT SAY SO IN FIRST PLACE?

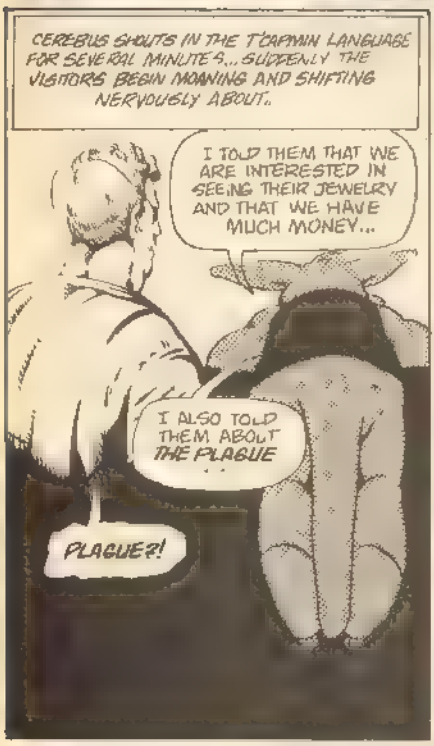
MEANWHILE, IN PALNU, LORD JULIUS PREPARES FOR THE HORDE OF T'GITANS HE KNOWS ARE COMING, PROBABLY BEFORE SPRING...
LORD JULIUS--LORD GORCE OF VESSARIAT HAS ARRIVED AS YOU ORDERED...
I DISTINCTLY REMEMBER ORDERING HIM 'WELL-DONE'
THIS MAN WOULD BARELY QUALIFY AS 'HALF-BAKED'
I AM HERE TO DO YOUR BIDDING, M'LORD
FEEDING ME STRAIGHT LINES ISN'T GOING TO GET YOU OFF THE HOOK, MY GOOD FELLOW!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF THE MENACE TO THE NORTH?
THE PEOPLE SAY THAT FLUROC HAS BEEN CAPTURED--THAT COMMANDER KRULL HAS FALLEN INTO ENEMY HANDS. THE PEOPLE FEAR THAT PALNU IS NEXT...
AND WHAT ABOUT YOU?
THE FEARS OF THE PEOPLE HAVE NEVER BEEN MY CONCERN...
WRITE THAT DOWN...
...I MAY WANT TO USE IT IN MY FAREWELL ADDRESS TO THE CITIZENS...
YES, SIR!...
I HAVE SOME BAD NEWS FOR YOU, GORCE--THE RUMOURS ARE TRUE! FURTHERMORE, OUR MILITARY FORCES ARE CONCENTRATED ON THE ONLIU BORDER AND THERE ISN'T THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE OF THEIR REACHING PALNU IN TIME TO SAVE US...
...THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN I WOULD ENTRUST WITH RAISING AN ARMY AND LEADING US TO VICTORY IN THIS OUR DARKEST HOUR...
AND THAT MAN IS YOU!

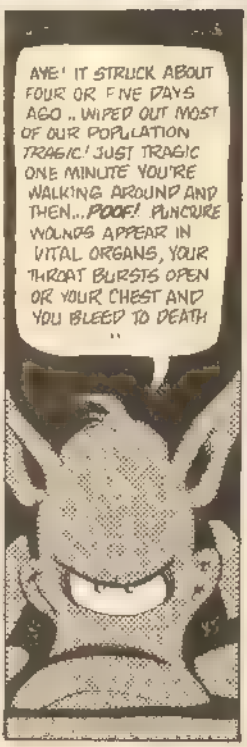
M-ME, LORD JULIUS?
I KNOW...
IT'S MORE OF AN HONOUR THAN YOU EVER DREAMED WOULD BE BESTOWED UPON YOU WHEN YOU ARRIVED HERE...
IF THE TRUTH BE KNOWN, I HAD HOPED TO LEAD OUR NEW ARMY AGAINST THESE GODLESS HEATHENS...
BUT THERE IS LAST-MINUTE PACKING TO BE DONE, ALAS! AND SO, MY PLACE IS HERE WITH THE WINE STEWARDS AND TRAVEL AGENTS ...
B-B-BUT...!
I KNOW YOU WILL LIVE UP TO ALL EXPECTATIONS -- MY AIDE WILL, OF COURSE, GIVE YOU AN ADDRESS WHERE YOU CAN REACH ME! WHEN ALL OF THIS IS HISTORY, WE MUST HAVE LUNCH AND ENGAGE IN A MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE...
B-B-BUT...!
BUT FOR NOW, MAY TARIM SPEED YOU ON YOUR WAY TO THE GREATER GLORY TO WHICH YOU COMMIT YOURSELF. THESE ARE TIMES WHICH CALL FOR EACH OF US TO DEDICATE OURSELVES WITH RENEWED VIGOUR TO THE TASK AT HAND...
YOUR NAME SHALL BE AS A SHINING BEACON TO ALL PALNU, FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY...
IS HE GONE?
YES, SIR...
EXCELLENT!
SEND IN A GLASS OF CHATEAU DEHRSION '26 AND THE LATEST SKI CONDITIONS FROM BOREALA
LORD GORCE?
I AM AFRAID LORD JULIUS HAS JUST DROPPED A RATHER SUBSTANTIAL MESS IN MY LAP, HARKER...
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, SIR?
DO? I'M GOING TO RAISE AN ARMY, DEFEAT THE T'GITANS, RALLY THE MERCHANT CLASS TO MY SIDE, TOPPLE THE BUREAUCRACY, TRY LORD JULIUS IN PUBLIC FOR HIGH TREASON AND SEIZE THE REIGNS OF POWER...
YES, SIR...
AND THEN I'M GOING TO MAKE SOME LONG-RANGE PLANS...

CER-REBUTZ, MY FRIENT-- I HOPE YOU HAFF FOUNT SOME-THINK..!
A PASSAGE IN ONE BOOK- NOTHING MORE..
ACH...
I AM AFRAIT I HAFF MATE A GRAFE ERROR IN CHUDGEMENT-- FLUROC'S WEALTH HASS BEEN GR-REATLY OFERESTIMATED!
HAV NG EXAMINT DER LOOT THAT WAS TAKEN, IT ISS MY CONSIDERT OPINION THAT VE VILL BE LUCKY IF VE ARE ABLE TO AFFORT TO HIRE ONE CAVALRYMAN..
AND THEN ONLY IFF HE PROVIDES HISS OWN HORSE...
CEREBUS HAS MARKED THE PLACE..
..THE INFORMATION MAY BE USEFUL IF IT ISN'T OUT OF DATE..
A BLEAK SITUATION, THEN?
JA.. PR-RETTY BLEAK.
HAIL STROMM!

HAIL STROMM!
YOU HAFF ZUMTHING TO TELL ME ABOUT, KRAUFTIG?
OUTSIDE NORTH WALL -- MANY MEN SOLDIERS TOO FUNNY CLOTHES
SMELL LIKE FLOWERS.
VOT DO YOU THINK?
SOUNDS LIKE MERCHANTS. FLUROC IS WAS. A MAJOR TRADING CENTER
THEY STANDINK OUT SIDE. YELLINK AT WARRIORS ON WALL
YELLING? YELLING WHAT?
SOUND LIKE "GIBBLE GIBBLE GIBBLE" TO KRAUFTIG
FOREIGN MERCHANTS AT THAT
MAYHAP WE SHOULD SEE WHAT THEY WANT...

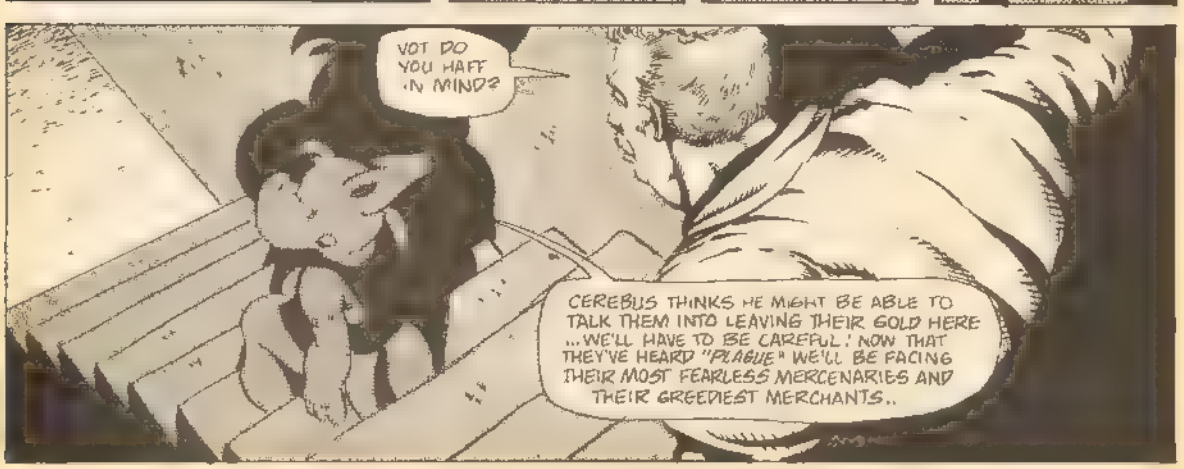
VELL?
N'GAMIN MERCHANTS.. THE CHAPS WITH THE SHIELDS AND SHORT JAVELINS ARE THEIR MERCENARY GUARDS.. THEY WANT TO KNOW IF SOME THING IS WRONG..
WE'RE IN LUCK...
THEY'VE BROUGHT FURS AND JEWELRY.. THEY WANT TO KNOW WHY WE DON'T LET THEM IN SO THEY CAN SHOW US...


CEREBUS SHOUTS IN THE T'CAPMIN LANGUAGE FOR SEVERAL MINUTES... SUDDENLY THE VISITORS BEGIN MOANING AND SHIFTING NERVOUSLY ABOUT.
I TOLD THEM THAT WE ARE INTERESTED IN SEEING THEIR JEWELRY AND THAT WE HAVE MUCH MONEY...
I ALSO TOLD THEM ABOUT THE PLAGUE
PLAGUE?!


AYE! IT STRUCK ABOUT FOUR OR FIVE DAYS AGO.. WIPED OUT MOST OF OUR POPULATION TRAGIC! JUST TRAGIC ONE MINUTE YOU'RE WALKING AROUND AND THEN... POOF! PUNCTURE WOUNDS APPEAR IN VITAL ORGANS, YOUR THROAT BURSTS OPEN OR YOUR CHEST AND YOU BLEED TO DEATH

AH! DER BODIES NEIN?
OUR VISITORS WILL BE LESS THAN EAGER TO EXAMINE THE LATE RESIDENTS OF FLUROC...

THEY'LL BE MULLING OVER THEIR NEXT MOVE FOR A WHILE. I SUGGEST WE GET ALL THE T'GITANS IN HERE DRESSED IN PALNAN GARB


VOT DO YOU HAFF IN MIND?
CEREBUS THINKS HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO TALK THEM INTO LEAVING THEIR GOLD HERE ...WE'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL! NOW THAT THEY'VE HEARD "PLAGUE" WE'LL BE FACING THEIR MOST FEARLESS MERCENARIES AND THEIR GREEDIEST MERCHANTS..

KRULL * IS STILL SECURE, I HOPE -
I WOULDN'T DO TO HAVE HIM SUDDENLY SHOW UP
JA GRIMES LEFT HISS POST TO GET AN ALE YESTERDAY, VHICH LET TO A SMALL NZ DENT

* COMMANDER KRULL, THE MILITARY CHAMPION OF FLURIC CAPTURED BY CEREBUS LAST ISSUE.

HE VAS GONE BUT FIFE MINUTES UND VHEN HE RETURNT, KRULL HAT SMASHT HISS IRON MASK AGAINST DER VALL TIL IT OPENT - RIPPT OFF HISS MANACLES VISS HISS TEETH, SNAPPT DER ROPES VISS HISS CHEST UND BICEPS...
AND VASS IN DER PR-ROCESS OF PULFER ZINK THE CEMENT ENCASING HISS FEET MIT DER BALL-UND-CHAIN ATTACHED TO HISS VAIST

HERE THEY COME HAVE YOU GOT THE FLASK?
JA
KEEP IT HANDY..
.. AND SMILE A LOT .
GENTLEMEN!
WELCOME!
WELCOME TO OUR FAIR CITY!
THIS THIS IS DREADFUL! WHAT OF MY FRIEND HAMMEL - THE SPICE MERCHANT?
DEAD.
STEMSON -- THE EXPORTER?
ALL DEAD. IN FACT I AM THE ONLY ONE IN FLUROC STILL ALIVE WHO SPEAKS YOUR LANGUAGE...
B BUT -- I WAS GIVEN STRICT ORDERS TO SHOW MY WARES ONLY TO STEMSON
WELL, YOU CAN IF YOU LIKE
AS LONG AS YOU DON'T EXPECT OVERWHELMING ENTHUSIASM...

I - I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN AND WE HAVE COME SUCH A LONG WAY
SHALL WE GO INSIDE
AND MAKE OUR SELVES MORE COMFORTABLE?
OH NO..
EH? VASS ISS? "SNIFFF"
FAUGH! SMELL LIKE PANROVIAN WHORE HOUSE..!
GLORE MUST HAVE MISSED THIS ONE..
"A TOITAN MARAUDER! STAY BACK, GENTLEMEN" CRIES CEREBUS IN TOAPMIN. "THEY CAN BE QUITE DANGEROUS!"
AH, ZERBUTZ! THESE ARE FRENTS OFF YOURS?
"IS IT NOT ENOUGH THAT I HAVE TO WATCH MY PEOPLE SQUIRT? MUST I ALSO ENDURE THESE CONSTANT BARBARIAN ATTACKS?" CONTINUES THE EARTH PIG..
ISS FUNNY- COULT HAFF SWORN YOU USED TO SPEAK SAME LANGUAGE AS ME..
'TAKE THAT!"
"AND THAT!"

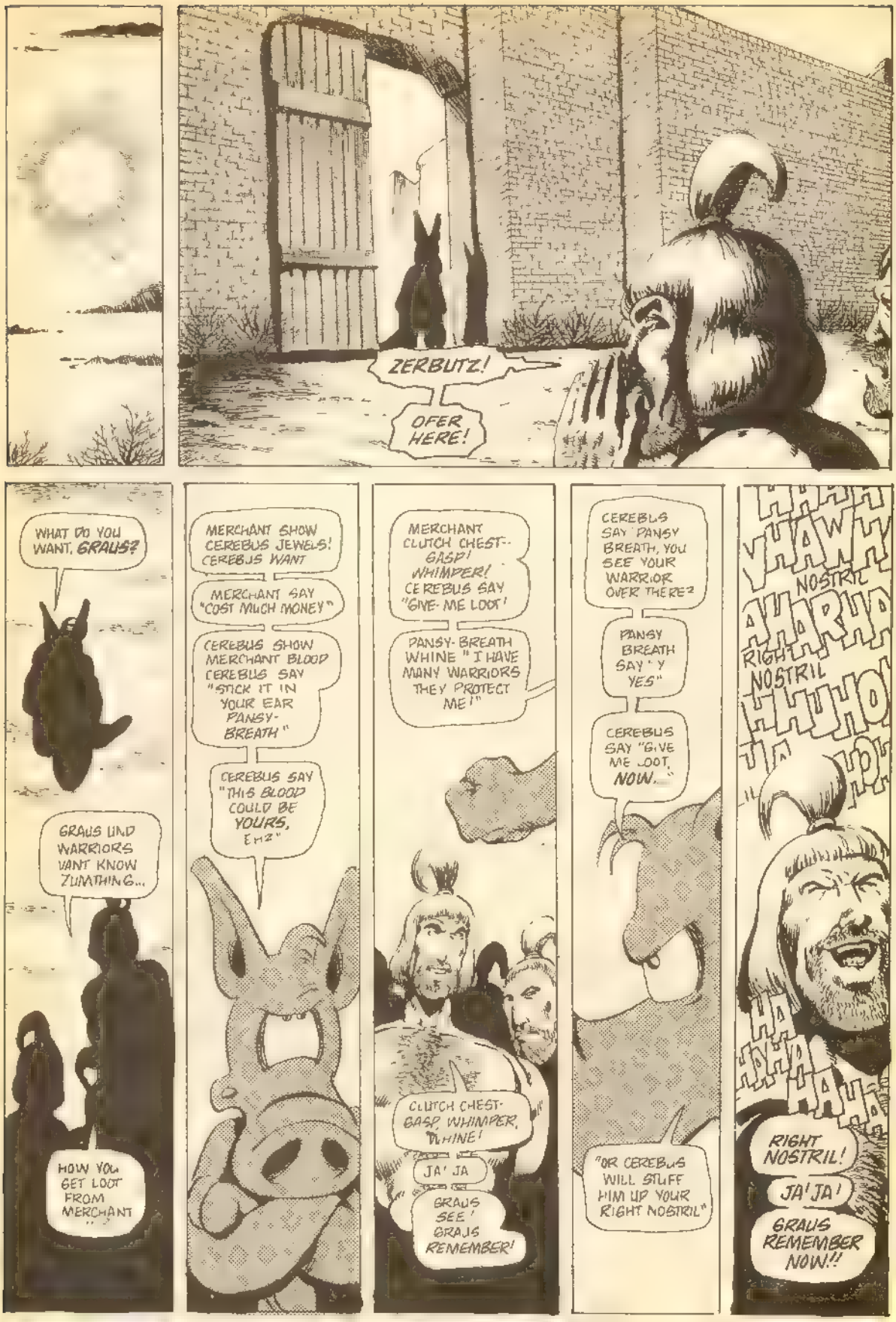
I SUGGEST THAT YOU HAVE HIM REMOVED -- AND, IF POSSIBLE, WE SHOULD DOUBLE HIS RATIONS FOR THE NEXT MONTH.
I THINK HE WILL BE MOST PLEAST WITH THAT- HOWEFFER, PERHAPS YOU SHOULT EXPLAIN YOUR JUSTICE TO THEM!...
THE T'GITANS STOOD WITH EYES RIVETED ON THE EARTH PIG! HIS PERFORMANCE HAD WORKED WONDERS WITH THE N'GAMIN WHO JABBERED EXCITEDLY ABOUT HIS BRAVERY AND QUICKNESS..
THE DISGUISED T'GITANS, HOWEVER, HAD JUST SEEN ONE OF STROMM'S CHOSEN OFFICERS BERATE A WARRIOR IN A FOREIGN TONGUE... AND THEN BATTER HIM INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS!
FOR HIS PART, GUDRE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO YET ANOTHER DISPLAY OF THE EARTH-PIG'S INGENUITY! HIGH QUALITY ENTERTAINMENT WAS HARD TO COME BY...
CEREBUS PUN SH SCHWAGERIN...
SCHWAGERIN STEAL WINE SKIN FROM CEREBUS...
THAT NOT SCHWAGERIN
THAT LIEBSCHAFT!
MMM
CEREBUS MAKE BIG MISTAKE CEREBUS MUCH SORRY
CEREBUS GIVE LIEBSCHAFT TWO WINE SKINS WHEN HE WAKE UP..
NOW IT WAS THE TURN OF THE T'GITANS TO ENTHUSE ABOUT THIS IMPRESSIVE DISPLAY OF HUMILITY AND FAIRNESS AS CEREBUS RETURNED TO THE BUSINESS AT HAND.
YOU SEEM TO HAVE A REMARKABLE CONTROL OVER DIFFICULT SITUATIONS
AND THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THE SITUATION IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN IT APPEARS.
NOW...
I BELIEVE YOU HAVE SOME JEWELRY TO SHOW ME...

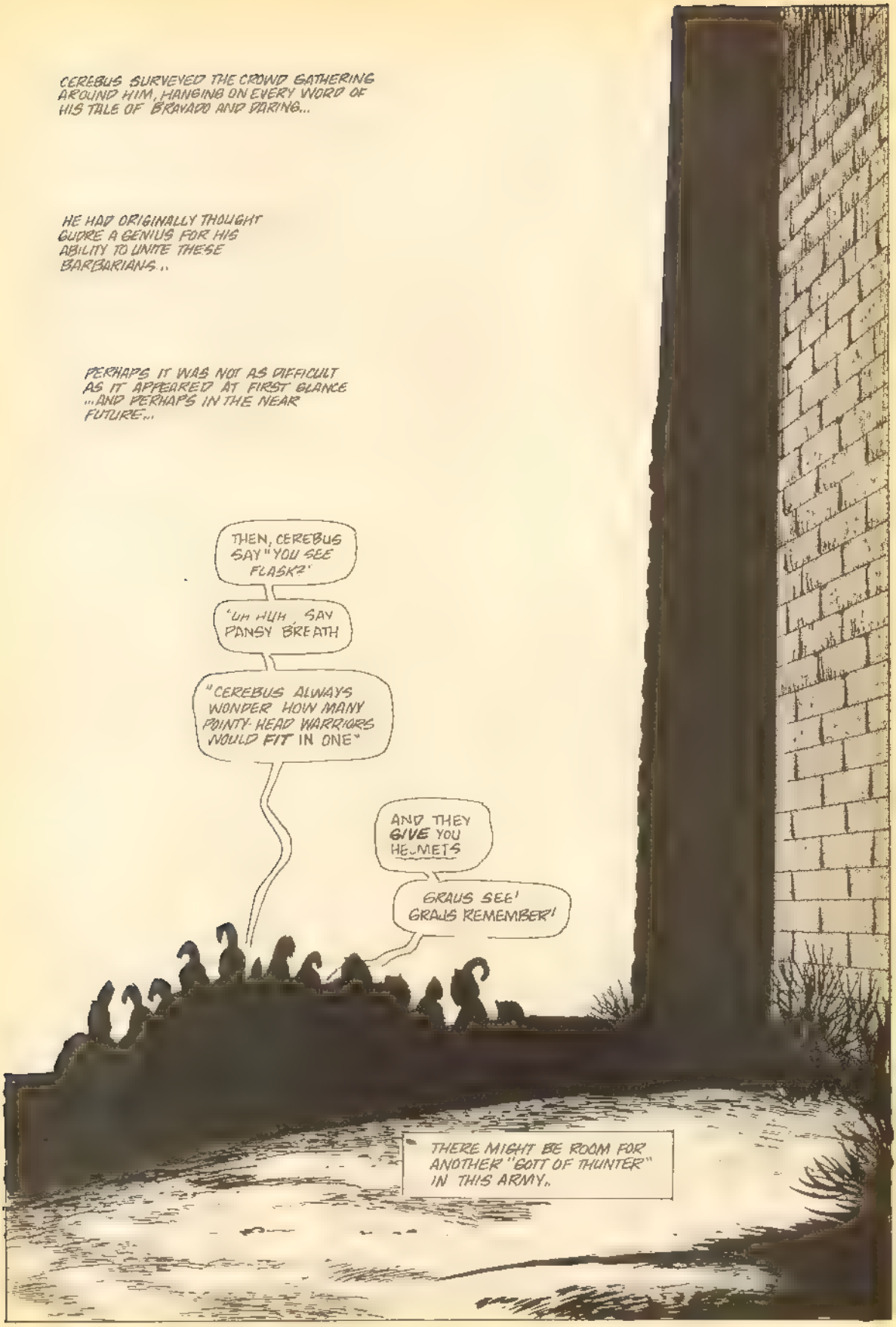
AS YOU CAN PLAINLY SEE, THESE ARE SOME OF THE FINEST AND MOST DELICATE EXAMPLES OF THE JEWELLER'S CRAFT..
I WOULD ASK THAT YOU EXAMINE EACH LINK. THERE ARE VIRTUALLY NO FLAWS! OF COURSE RESS HAS ALWAYS BEEN NOTED FOR
STRANGE
STRANGE?
WHAT IS STRANGE?
NOTHING! NOTHING! uh CEREBUS WISHES TO KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT THIS OWL..
AH, THE OWL! YOU HAVE THE EYE OF A CONNOISSEUR! A CLASSIC PIECE SCULPTED WITH INFINTE CARE AND ADORNED BY THE FINEST...
DID YOU CUT YOURSELF SHAVING, MY FRIEND?
WHY--NO! WHAT ON EARTH WOULD MAKE YOU THINK THAT I HAD ?
THERE'S...
...BLOOD ON YOUR NECK
BLOOD? NOW WHERE COULD I HAVE.
OH, NO! IS IS IT, COULD IT BE THE P P P.
HIGHLY UNLIKELY THE SUDDEN ERUPTION OF BLOOD IS ONLY ONE OF THE SYMPTOMS

HOWEVER, IF YOUR HEART WERE TO START BEATING TOO FAST..
TARIM!
OR YOU WERE TO FIND YOURSELF WITH AN INEXPLICABLE SHORTNESS OF BREATH
HUH-
HUH HUH HUH
OR... IF YOU WERE TO BEGIN PERSPIRING EXCESSIVELY.
HUH HUH HUH HUH HUH HUH HUH
I WOULD BE FORCED TO ADMIT THAT THE PLAGUE HAD CLAIMED ANOTHER VICTIM.
HUH. I HUH.. MY BREATH..HUH... HEART... HUH-PER...HUH'...P... .. PER.. HUH...HUH .. PERSPIRING HUH EXCESS..HUH
HOW MUCH FOR THIS LOCKET?
FORGET THE HUH DAMN LOCK HUH LOCK HUH FORGET THE HUH JEWELRY.. I HUH. I HAVE IT..
HAVE WHAT?
THE HUH PLAGUE!!
NO!
YES!
OH, MY FRIEND I AM SO SORRY...
W SOB HUH CAN I SOB HUH WHAT CAN I DO?

GJDRE?
MY FLASK
YOU CAN 'HUH' THINK ABOUT =HUH= DRINK =HUH= DRINKING HUH= WHEN I'VE =HUH= JUST =HUH= CAUGHT THE HUH' PLAGUE ?!
OH, THIS IS NO ORDINARY FLASK
THIS CONTAINS MEDICINE THAT CURES ME OF THE PLAGUE
CURES..
=HUH=
...THE PLAGUE?
AYE. MY ALCHEMIST PERFECTED IT JUST BEFORE HE DIED..
PLEASE
=HUH= YOU MUST GIVE =HUH= ME SOME
I AM AFRAID THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! THERE'S ONLY ENOUGH IN THIS FLASK TO CURE ONE PERSON..
I'LL BUY IT FROM YOU
BUY IT FROM ? DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE SAYING? IF I SOLD THIS FLASK TO YOU I'D BE DEAD SOON
YOU'RE ASKING ME TO PUT A PRICE-TAG ON MY OWN LIFE!
I =HUH= KNOW
HOW HUH MUCH?
I REFUSE- NO ONE COULD PUT A PRICE ON HIS LIFE! COULD YOU? WERE YOU IN MY POSITION, WHAT PRICE WOULD YOU DEMAND FOR THE FLASK?
A HANDFUL OF MERE NECKLACES?
THEY'RE =HUH= YOURS.
TAKE =HUH= THEM.
A FEW LOUSY RINGS?
A GOLDEN ONE.?
TAKE IT =HUH= PLEASE!
HERE! =HUH= HERE!

SOME HOURS LATER..
UNCUT DIAMONDS..
MY SILK HANDKERCHIEF
PLEASE! IT'S ALL I HAVE.
WHAT ZERBUTZ SAY TO FOP WHO-SMELL-LIKE FLOWERS?
I DO NOT KNOW -- BUT WHATEFER IT VAS, IT SEEMS TO BE VORKING!
BUT SURELY A LIFE MEANS MORE THAN A PILE OF BAUBLES! WOULD YOU THINK ME UNREASONABLE IF I ASKED FOR YOUR GUARDS' HELMETS AS WELL?
YOU HEARD HIM HAVE YOUR MEN SURRENDER THEIR HELMETS.
YOU HAVE BOUGHT OUR SERVICES-- NOT OUR ARMOUR! WHAT COULD YOU DO ABOUT IT IF WE WERE TO REFUSE?
I-COULD-BREATH-ON-YOU-
CLANK CLANG
VERY WELL -- PERHAPS THESE FEW TRINKETS WILL CONSOLE THE SURVIVORS STILL LEFT AFTER I HAVE PASSED FROM THIS MORTAL COIL...
YOU BETTER GO BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND!
CERTAINLY! OH THANK YOU, THANK YOU!


ZERBUTZ!
OFER HERE!
WHAT DO YOU WANT, GRAUS?
GRAUS UND WARRIORS VANT KNOW ZUMTHING...
HOW YOU GET LOOT FROM MERCHANT ...
MERCHANT SHOW CEREBUS JEWELS! CEREBUS WANT
MERCHANT SAY "COST MUCH MONEY"
CEREBUS SHOW MERCHANT BLOOD CEREBUS SAY "STICK IT IN YOUR EAR PANSY-BREATH"
CEREBUS SAY "THIS BLOOD COULD BE YOURS, EHZ"
MERCHANT CLUTCH CHEST-- GASP! WHIMPER! CEREBUS SAY "GIVE ME LOOT"
PANSY-BREATH WHINE "I HAVE MANY WARRIORS THEY PROTECT ME!"
CLUTCH CHEST- GASP, WHIMPER, WHINE!
JA' JA
GRAUS SEE! GRAUS REMEMBER!
CEREBUS SAY PANSY BREATH, YOU SEE YOUR WARRIOR OVER THERE?
PANSY BREATH SAY "Y YES"
CEREBUS SAY "GIVE ME LOOT, NOW..."
"OR CEREBUS WILL STUFF HIM UP YOUR RIGHT NOSTRIL"
HAHAHAHAHA NOSTRIL HAHAHA RIGHT NOSTRIL HAHAHA HA HA HA HA HA
RIGHT NOSTRIL!
JA' JA'
GRAUS REMEMBER NOW!!


CEREBUS SURVEYED THE CROWD GATHERING AROUND HIM, HANGING ON EVERY WORD OF HIS TALE OF BRAVADO AND DARING...
HE HAD ORIGINALLY THOUGHT CUDRE A GENIUS FOR HIS ABILITY TO UNITE THESE BARBARIANS...
PERHAPS IT WAS NOT AS DIFFICULT AS IT APPEARED AT FIRST GLANCE ...AND PERHAPS IN THE NEAR FUTURE...
THEN, CEREBUS SAY "YOU SEE FLASK?"
"UH HUH, SAY PANSY BREATH
"CEREBUS ALWAYS WONDER HOW MANY POINTY-HEAD WARRIORS WOULD FIT IN ONE"
AND THEY GIVE YOU HELMETS
GRAUS SEE! GRAUS REMEMBER!
THERE MIGHT BE ROOM FOR ANOTHER "GOTT OF THUNTER" IN THIS ARMY.

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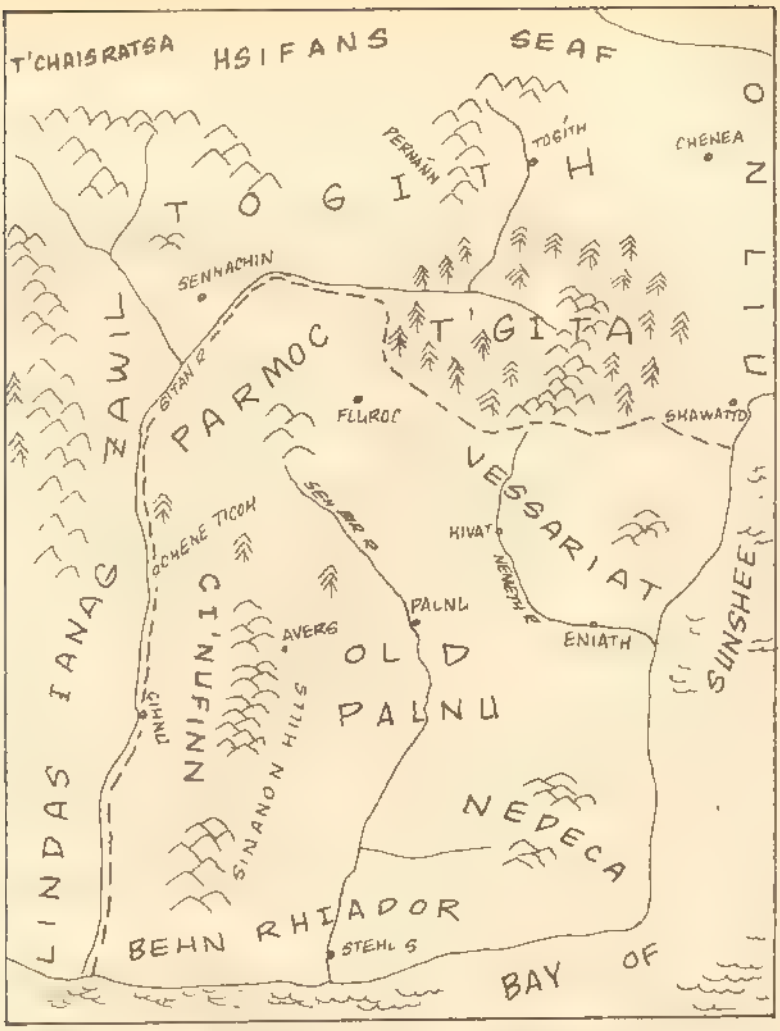

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AARDVARK COMMENT

221 QUEEN ST S. #1401 - KITCHENER-ONTARIO N2G 1W5

Dear Marvel Employee

Recently the copyright laws were changed to provide more protection for artists and writers who are the sole creators of a work. The new law makes a very clear distinction between artists who create and produce a piece of art or writing on their own, and those who do work under supervision, as part of a collective work or series or as one of many contributors to a work. Creative people who fall in the latter category are considered employees-for-hire. All creative people at Marvel are employed on that basis.

In order to insure our continued ownership of the material we produce and publish, and to clearly define our position under the new law, we have drawn up a work-order agreement (enclosed).

Please write in the date, your name and address at the top in the appropriate blanks, sign at the bottom under "supplier", and return as soon as possible.

This agreement does not change any of Marvel's policies toward freelance creative people. It is only intended to restate the relationship that has always existed between Marvel and its freelance creative staff.

Our policies of returning artwork, paying reprint money, and providing insurance are exactly the same as before.

Please feel free to consult a lawyer and/or call me to discuss this.

Jim Shooter,
Cadence Publishing
575 Madison Avenue,
New York, N.Y.

Oh yassuh massa — Ise returnin' yo' contrack right away — oh lordy yass yass yass.

. . .

Dave,

You raised a couple of points in your comment in issue 15 that we found interesting regarding Marvel. When we began putting ELFQUEST out, we thought that it might be a bit fashionable to take potshots at the mainstream comics companies from our position down in the bushes, and we did from time to time. We've learned, though, that that particular attitude just isn't justified any more. Marvel the corporate giant is still made up of at least some folks who are real and caring, and it's they who feel the barbs most and deserve it least. So we stopped. Besides, it's energy better expended in other ways, and who knows, maybe WaRP Graphics the corporate midget will be a target someday. Who needs enemies?

Richard and Wendy Pini
2 Reno Road,
Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Potshots? Bushes? Me? Heaven forbid!

. . .

Dear Dave,

Who is that masked man? An imposter to be sure. Yes, but an earthpig all the same. Dave, meet Aardvarks Anomalous, the last hope for uncivilized aardvarks in the Midwest.

Aardvarks Anomalous — for we are quite abnormal as aardvarks go, i.e., we are not short, grey, nor furry. I was the first. Intrigued by a fanzine ad for Cerebus 8, I became an instant groupie. Naturally my first convert was my hairdresser — who else can you trust? But the movement hasn't stopped; since this picture three new members have been accepted and more are on the way. Cerebus has become the hero of our tiny, all-male college in Watertown (never mind where that is), replacing the "$1.98 Beauty Contest" for all-around popularity. (And some of those 1.98 beauties have some very good all-arounds.) Cerebus even planted and dedicated our class tree. A legend in his own time.

However, I ought to apologize for the plagiary on the shirts, but I think the cover from 8 is some of the best work you've ever done. Besides, you wouldn't spank a few loyal boys for making bootleg T-shirts of their only true hero, now would you? Or maybe you would; that could be fun too. But don't you worry, I've got a great white silkworm that guards all my screens from piracy.

We just would like to commend you on a job well done. Cerebus has made me proud of my celibacy, as well as humoring us all more than babies' bottoms in the springtime. That little guy's got spunk. There are just two questions: 1) Did you discontinue the Cerebus series that was running in THE BUYER'S GUIDE? We would be lost without it. I thought your slightly effeminate Prince Valiant was one of your better characters — will he ever make it into one of the books? 2) Where does Cerebus keep his sword when not in use? It has created a great problem for me in costume. All of a sudden it seems to appear in his hand from nowhere. Oh well anything can happen in comics, right?

Sometime I'll have to try apricot brandy from a navel. A little belly-button lint might improve its somewhat nauseating flavor. With my luck she would have an "outsie" anyhow.

Lots of love and chain mail bikinis,
AARDVARKS ANOMALOUS
812 Richards Avenue,
Watertown, Wisconsin
53094

I've finally figured out what's wrong with comics. All of the groupies are celibate males driving with one headlight out. If I'd have known that four years ago, I would have enrolled in a plumbing course. At least (from what I've heard) plumber groupies are female. Answers to your questions: 1) Wait until the T'Gitans get closer to Palnu. 2) Right.

. . .

Dave & Deni,

Just finished reading Cerebus 15 (What a fantastic cover!) and as is now the norm with each issue, LOVED IT!!! I don't want to ramble on too long, so I'll just ask my question and be ramblin' on (chortle.) In one issue a while back, Deni mentioned that someone was supposed to be doing some sort of Cerebus paperweight, or some such thing. Has this ever come about?

Finally a serious proposition. I'd like to offer whatever services I may provide to help the mag survive. God knows I'd hate to see yet another quality project go down the tubes.

Punchem innaface
Bryan Reeves
1813 Peach,
St. Charles MO. 63301

We have the only paperweight right now. We're still trying to figure out how to ship them so you don't end up buying seven dollars worth of Aardvark parts (build your own! It's fun! It's nerve-wracking!). As to your serious proposition, the biggest problem we face is the fact that no one seems to know that we're monthly and available from Sea Gate Distributors. It is a very easy matter for any

AARDVARK COMMENT

221 QUEEN ST S. #1401 - KITCHENER-ONTARIO N2G 1W5

comic shop to contact Sea Gate and get the latest issue shipped direct to them. Each issue becomes available around the 10th of the month on the cover. (i.e. Phil and Jonni should receive this issue by the 10th of July). If your local comic shop never seems to have the most current issue, encourage them to contact Sea Gate directly. Phil gives thirty-day terms and looks great in a Captain Marvel costume. With THE COMIC READER refusing to list Cerebus, Elfquest and others in its top 100 specialty shop list, it's really up to you folks to make sure that a condition of "out of sight out of mind" doesn't develop. Aardvarks, ho!

. . .

Dear Deni & Dave,

I follow the adventures of Deni & Dave almost as avidly as I follow those of Cerebus. Let me just say that I for one (and I would bet lots more people) appreciate every drop of blood, sweat and tears (an A-1 flaming cliche, but you get my meaning) that you folks put into Cerebus. It's definitely a high class comic. I don't know much about comics, but I can recognize topnotch quality! Though I didn't think it was possible to improve on a wonderful thing, the art, story and humor of Cerebus have gone steadily up. I thought Elrod was magnificent, but the Priest of Tarim and Lord Julius are classic (to use an original term). I've absolutely fallen in love with Cerebus from my first making acquaintance and I would run off with him in a minute, were it not for you-know-who who is waiting for him to come back to her (sigh!). Keep it coming.

Rayna Alsberg,
531 North Main,
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

I think I'm starting to get the idea. I get all the celibate males driving with one headlight out and old Snout-face gets all the groupies from Ann Arbor. Oh yeah? Well let's see you draw the next issue you short, grey gigolo! (pretty soon I'm going to have enough disassociated personalities for a bridge game).

NOTES

Okay, I admit it. I do take potshots from the bushes. I was in something of a dilemma about printing the first two letters this issue. Just to make sure no one goes off the deep end a) it was a joke and b) I only did it because both letters came in on the same day. I too know a number of people who are part of Marvel Comics and their attitudes on the company are as widely different as one could be on a given subject. It ranges from Gene Day who enjoys inking for Marvel and whose dedication and sincerity I would never question in a million years to Howard Chaykin whose interest in the company is limited to what he himself is doing and what Walt Simonson (with whom he shares a studio) is doing on BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. I think it fair to say that anyone who is making their living from comic books is, at some point or another, deciding their own positions vis-a-vis Marvel and DC. I have to admit that I was rather lukewarm on the whole issue of the work-made-for-hire contract — until it came time for me to sign one of them. I wouldn't for a minute dump on anyone who did — or in fact dump on anyone working in the offices or devoting their lives to these companies. But I discovered that my feelings about my own work ran pretty deep and I found that ownership of that work was something that was important to me. I hope that Richard and Wendy will understand that I am not out to make enemies of the people at Marvel, from Jim Shooter down to the janitor. But that I don't share their opinion on the composition of the company. To me there is something innately terrifying about two companies virtually controlling the output of comic books in North America. Terrifying that they own, lock, stock and letratone, some of the best ideas that sincere creative people have come up with. Terrifying that Steve Gerber signed the back of his cheque for a certain Man-Thing story and can now watch his creation being manipulated and distorted into something he never intended it to be — without the recourse of picking up his duck and going home. I respect Richard and Wendy for doing their own books, for retaining ownership and trying to build their company in such a way that other people will someday have that same chance. I also understand and respect all the members of the Guild who are back working for Marvel and DC despite the conditions that exist. I just don't happen to think that the system in operation now is the best thing for this medium and that it is not the most conducive way to get the best from the creative talents that exist. Quite the opposite, it seems to encourage half-assed efforts in order to guarantee that you are not surrendering your rights to something of value. And how many of us, Steve Gerber included, could know in advance that our ducks were of any value?

I'd be interested in any opinions on this from our readers. We'll print the best ones.

Pictured above are David Sellnow (the grey one in the middle), Steve Soukup, Carl Balge, Jon Tesch, and Dave Leistekow. David Sellnow will sell now the T-shirts pictured for 5.50 plus 1.00 postage from the address at the end of his letter.

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Denis Kitchen